National Police Officers Association of America

The Law Enforcement Digest

Gerald S. Arenberg
Executive Secretary

Firearms Control in the United States:

The Position of the National Police Officers Association of America

by Frank J. Schira, President

EVERY YEAR two opposing forces meet in the legislatures of our nation's states and in our capitol to ponder the question of firearms control. By control I mean the power to determine who shall have the right to purchase handguns and rifles. In turn, we are asked to state our position in the matter as a representative of thousands of law enforcement officers throughout the United States.

We have given the matter considerable thought. We have heard and read many views on the subject.

Some of the proposals are to restrict the purchase of handguns (such as revolvers) to police officers and such persons as licensed by the police department. The latter would involve a check into the character of each person making such a purchase and is intended to place firearms in the hands of good and honest citizens. In many cities and states such a system exists to one degree or another. The laws vary so much, however, that the citizen hesitates when he travels to another state to carry his firearm.

Another proposal is the registration of firearms (in some cities this is a voluntary program). This gives the police a record of the weapons purchased and to whom they were sold.

Advocates of stronger laws would abolish the right of citizens to have firearms at all and limit their use to police officers. On the other hand such organizations as the National Rifle Association advocate the right of the individual to "bear arms" as a guarantee of the Constitution. Others say that it's plain foolish to limit the use and purchase of firearms to policemen as a means to reduce violent deaths and accessibility of firearms to criminals. If a man wants a gun to use for a crime, a law against having a gun is not enough to deter him from its use or availability through underworld sources.

Without appearing to sit on a fence we feel that an American citizen of voting age and of good character should have the right to purchase without restriction a handgun, pistol, revolver, rifle, shotgun, or a like item without interference by a government body. A record of the purchased, the serial number, its intended use, and perhaps a test bullet from the weapon might be required for the police department as an aid in solving any crimes that might be traced to the firearm in the future. But to place the purchase of firearms in the hands of one official would give cause in some cases to abuse.

The history of our nation has been written by volunteer militia who relied on their own weapons. The professional soldiers are so few in number that of necessity they must depend on trained volunteers who are capable of handling firearms. Even today with the threat of gigantic H-Bombs, the knowledge that millions of firearms of all sizes are stored in homes throughout the United States might well discourage an aggressor from our shores. It would be the means of fighting back by the civilian population in time of war or invasion.

We have thousands upon thousands of gun clubs and sporting groups throughout the United States. These men and women in the last few years have strengthened their programs to teach gun safety to the youth of America. For every criminal that uses a gun to rob and kill, we have ten times that number of armed citizens who are able to assist the police in capturing these potential killers *because they are armed.*

Let's not tie red tape around the hammer of the handgun and restrict good men and women from owning firearms. We must keep American strong in every way and to take away the heritage of the "Minuteman" by such laws is foolish and an aid to the enemy we are fighting daily in our war against crime.

When do-gooders tell you that guns are a menace to law enforcement, show them this statement by the national association of the men responsible for law enforcement. And if anti-gun legislation rears its ugly head in your area, present this statement "in evidence" —and ask any police exponent of the bill why he strays so far from the avowed belief of his "guild."